

Weekly Study of Sunday's Message.

Sunday March 20, 2022. "How can we have faith of a child?"

I Intro.

Welcome to the weekly devotional that gives you some specific things to work through from the message Sunday. Whether you were able to participate in this service or not, this devotion is free-standing and you can still use it to help you dig deeper into your own spiritual walk. We're now well in 2022 and we've got some big things planned. A great group of familiar and new faces join us each Sunday. Our children's area is expanding and we are retooling our student ministry. We also have many ways you can plug into life at NCC. You can check all that out through our social media sites. We're so encouraged by your love and presence when you gather with us. If you're still joining us online, we love and so appreciate your presence also. We are 100% committed to our virtual attenders. We are your church family, and if there is ANYTHING you need, prayer, ideas or suggestions, please pass them our way. We know the future is still uncertain, but we are committed to making our virtual congregation as central to NCC as our in person group.

II Recap.

We're in our third Sunday of our "***Bible says WHAT?!***" series looking at some of the hard sayings of Jesus. There were a lot of teachings of Jesus that can just be head scratchers. They're vague, confusing, can be interpreted in so many different ways, and at times just plain contradictory. So, we began this study with just some basic, fundamental understandings of how to interpret scripture before we could dive into some of these harder teachings.

First, the primary foundation for this series is to create a safe place for us to admit that sometimes it's VERY difficult to make sense of what scripture is saying. And how we're supposed to apply it to our everyday life. Scholars and experts over the years have vehemently disagreed about what certain passages and teachings mean just proves this point. Which gives us permission to struggle also.

Second, our understanding of scripture is as much rooted in how we were raised, our spiritual background, as it is having a correct understanding. The more honest we are about that, the more honestly we can approach scripture to let it speak to us. That also includes people who didn't grow up in any faith system, and their hesitancy or discomfort with scripture.

Third, and finally, our conversation around each of these passages will NOT be answers. We love answers. We just want to know the things we're supposed to know or do in order to live how God has called us to. Our understanding of God, scripture, and how to live will always be more a process of continual understanding and growth than just acquiring answers. This is because we have to leave room for the mystery of God. We will never have answers, but we can always be working towards a growing understanding and a relationship. And that's the entire goal of this series. We need to wrestle with these thoughts about reading scripture before we talk about being born again.

III Sunday.

Churches have always placed a high value on teaching our kids the in's and out's of following Jesus. But we haven't always seen them as what our faith should look like. And this is exactly what Jesus is saying in the passage we're going to hit. So first a couple of questions.

How have you understood what it means to; "have the faith of a child"?

Where in this teaching do you have some struggles to understand what Jesus is saying?

The primary passage used in this teaching is **Matthew 18:1-10**.

What jumped out to you from this passage?

Did you see anything new that you hadn't noticed before about this teaching?

Another account of this story is found in Luke 18, and gives us some context about this hard saying because of the stories Luke bookends this teaching with. So, from Matthew and the Luke account, we can see some specific teachings Jesus links with what it means to have the faith of a child.

B. How do you become like a child and be the greatest?

1. Turn from your sins. Some of you are going to have this visceral response to sin...and I get that. Many of us have in our past had an abused relationship with 'sin'. Some preacher stood in a pulpit, and beat you up about YOUR sins. Because of that, many of us developed an aversion to the word 'sin'. Which is unfortunate...there is a thing called sin. Because we all want a word for things bigger than mistakes, messups. We know the difference between being late for something and causing physical, emotional, harm to another person. Scripture, and Jesus, give us a word, to help describe when we are deeply hurt, betrayed, harmed, etc. by another person...SIN.

Definition. Define sin as it was originally intended. **Greek (*hamartia*)- missing the mark.** We tend to frame it in the understanding that there is this perfect, flawless way you're supposed to be, solely grounded in our personal behavior, (the bullseye), and you hit away from it, that's sin. The problem is that's not how ANY of The Law is written, described, or explained. It's not this isolated, separate, expectation of personal behavior. Sin is ALWAYS defined, and taught, in relationship. Sin is what breaks, harms, relationships with either God or other people. Turning from your sins is to stop doing things that break your relationship with God or with others.

2. Become humble. *"Becomes as humble as a child..."* Luke's account of this story is shorter and sandwiched between two stories that Luke most likely intended to give us a picture, some context, to what it means to become like a child. The parable of the Pharisee and the tax collector paints a picture of being aware of your dependency on God's grace. It's not your goodness, ability to do the right things that justifies you. It's your desire to surrender to the grace of God. The process of being justified by the work of the Holy Spirit, being transformed, is to humble yourself.

3. Live with simplicity. The story in Luke after Jesus talked about the faith of a child. The rich man who came to Jesus to be saved was told to let go of things he was holding onto. Again, the process of gaining eternal life, being the greatest, seeing and entering into the KoG is learning to live a life of simplicity. Those who hold onto all their stuff, possessions, comfort, security, will not fit through the eye of a needle. Jesus is calling you to let go of a few things to experience the Kingdom of Heaven/God, the fullest life, here and now and will be.

IV Challenge.

Kal closed with three challenges to live with faith like a child.

What would it look like to practice each of these?

1. Protect relationships with everyone...especially God. Your choices, decisions you make, will be centered on how each specific decision affects your relationship with God, and those around you.

2. Don't think less of yourself. Just think of yourself less often. True humility, being humble, is letting go of the need to be in the spotlight, getting attention, getting your way, and deferring to others.

3. Learn to live with open hands. Hold everything loosely and learn to live simply and free.